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E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/10/2016

TAGS: PREL VT

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE VIEWS ON CUBA TRANSITION

REF: Sandrolini-Larrea emails

CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Sandrolini, Charge d'affaires a.i.,
EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Charge d'affaires discussed Cuba with Holy See
Acting FM on August 10, pressing USG views. The Holy See does
not plan to make any public statements at this time. Post
nevertheless encourages Department contact with senior Holy See
officials on this issue. End summary.

¶2. (C) During an August 10 meeting with Charge d'affaires on
Lebanon, Holy See Acting FM Parolin noted points on Cuba which
Charge had delivered earlier in the week. Charge took the
opportunity once again to press USG view that Cuba should
release political prisoners, restore fundamental freedoms, and
commit to free and fair multiparty elections. Charge noted that
USG is asking other countries to support these goals publicly
and asked whether the Holy See could make a public statement as
well.

¶3. (C) Parolin appreciated the reassurances provided by the USG
(e.g. that Cubans would lead the way to any change, that the USG
is committed to safe and orderly migration, etc.) but said the
Holy See would certainly not make any statement now. He
reminded charge that Havana-based Cardinal Ortega and the Cuban
bishops conference had spoken already (praying for Fidel's
health and opposing any foreign intervention) and it would not
be appropriate for Rome to say anything more at this time.

Comment

¶4. (C) Parolin's comment reflects several considerations. The
Holy See is always wary of stepping on the toes of national
bishops' conferences in matters concerning that country; apart
from that, it is naturally cautious in all public political
matters. The Holy See may also consider it unseemly to speak
about "transition" as if it were anticipating Castro's death.
Post understands that Department may be considering a high-level
contact with a Vatican senior official on this issue; we would
encourage such contact. There is little likelihood that the
Holy See would change its mind about a public statement, but we
might be able to influence what the Holy See says privately to
the bishops conference about its own public statements.

SANDROLINI